

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
DALLAS DIVISION

CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL HINSHAW, §  
TDCJ No. 1781183, §

Petitioner, §

V. §

No. 3:20-cv-1249-L-BN

LORIE DAVIS, Director §  
Texas Department of Criminal Justice §  
Correctional Institutions Division, §

Respondent. §

**FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE**

Petitioner Christopher Michael Hinshaw, a Texas prisoner, is serving a 35-year sentence that he received after entering a negotiated guilty plea to aggravated sexual assault of a child. *See State v. Hinshaw*, No. F11-18994-L (Crim. Dist. Ct. No. 5, Dallas Cnty., Tex. Apr. 20, 2012); Dkt. No. 3 at 2. He did not appeal. *See* Dkt. No. 3 at 3. But he did file, no sooner than December 28, 2018, the date that he signed the petition, a state habeas action. *See Ex parte Hinshaw*, W11-18994-L(A) (Crim. Dist. Ct. No. 5, Dallas Cnty., Tex.); Dkt. No. 3 at 3-4.

Hinshaw has now filed a *pro se* habeas action under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. *See generally* Dkt. No. 3. His case has been referred to the undersigned United States magistrate judge under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b) and a standing order of reference from United States District Judge Sam A. Lindsay.

And the undersigned enters these findings of fact, conclusions of law, and recommendation that, for the reasons and to the extent explained below, the Court

should dismiss the habeas application under Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases without prejudice to Hinshaw's right to fully exhaust his state court remedies.

A petitioner must fully exhaust state court remedies before seeking federal habeas relief. See 28 U.S.C. § 2254(b)(1)(A); *Loynachan v. Davis*, 766 F. App'x 156, 159 (5th Cir. 2019) ("A federal court may not grant habeas relief unless the petitioner 'has exhausted the remedies available in the courts of the State.'" (quoting 28 U.S.C. § 2254(b)(1)(A))). This entails submitting the factual and legal basis of any claim to the highest available state court for review in a procedurally correct manner. See *Satterwhite v. Lynaugh*, 886 F.2d 90, 92-93 (5th Cir. 1989).<sup>1</sup>

Texas prisoners must present their claims to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals (the "CCA") in a petition for discretionary review or an application for state post-conviction relief. See *Bautista v. McCotter*, 793 F.2d 109, 110 (5th Cir. 1986). "A petitioner need merely press a claim through one of these avenues to exhaust that

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<sup>1</sup> See also *Nickleson v. Stephens*, 803 F.3d 748, 753 (5th Cir. 2015) ("The exhaustion doctrine demands more than allusions in state court to facts or legal issues that might be comprehended within a later federal habeas petition. The exhaustion doctrine is based on comity between state and federal courts, respect for the integrity of state court procedures, and 'a desire to protect the state courts' role in the enforcement of federal law.'" (quoting *Castille v. Peoples*, 489 U.S. 346, 349 (1989) (quoting, in turn, *Rose v. Lundy*, 455 U.S. 509, 518 (1982)))); *Loynachan*, 766 F. App'x at 159 ("To determine whether a § 2254 petitioner has exhausted a claim, his federal claim should be compared with the claim he raised in state court 'It is not enough that all the facts necessary to support the federal claim were before the state courts or that a somewhat similar state-law claim was made.' 'Rather, the petitioner must afford the state court a "fair opportunity to apply controlling legal principles to the facts bearing upon his constitutional claim.'" This reflects the fact in the habeas system, state courts are provided the first opportunity to assess the claim." (citations omitted)).

claim. [But, t]o exhaust a claim, it must also be presented in a procedural context in which state courts necessarily review the claim on the merits.” *Loynachan*, 766 F. App’x at 159 (citations omitted).

Under Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases, a district court may summarily dismiss a 28 U.S.C. § 2254 habeas application “if it plainly appears from the face of the petition and any exhibits annexed to it that the petitioner is not entitled to relief in the district court.” *Id.*

This rule differentiates habeas cases from other civil cases with respect to *sua sponte* consideration of affirmative defenses. The district court has the power under Rule 4 to examine and dismiss frivolous habeas petitions prior to any answer or other pleading by the state. This power is rooted in “the duty of the court to screen out frivolous applications and eliminate the burden that would be placed on the respondent by ordering an unnecessary answer.”

*Kiser v. Johnson*, 163 F.3d 326, 328 (5th Cir. 1999) (quoting 28 U.S.C. foll. § 2254 Rule 4 Advisory Committee Notes); see *Rodriguez v. Dretke*, No. 5:04-cv-28-C, 2004 WL 1119704, at \*1 (N.D. Tex. May 17, 2004) (applying Rule 4 prior to the filing of an answer where this “Court [was] of the opinion that [the petitioner] has failed to exhaust his state court remedies” (citing *Kiser*)).<sup>2</sup>

Neither Hinshaw’s Section 2254 petition nor records available online from

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<sup>2</sup> See also *Magouirk v. Phillips*, 144 F.3d 348, 357 (5th Cir. 1998) (“[T]here is no doubt that a federal court may raise *sua sponte* a petitioner’s failure to exhaust state law remedies and apply that doctrine to bar federal litigation of petitioner’s claims until exhaustion is complete.” (citations omitted)); cf. *Dispensa v. Lynaugh*, 847 F.2d 211, 217 (5th Cir. 1988) (“This requirement, that a petitioner who seeks federal redress must first seek relief in state courts and thus exhaust his state remedies, is not a jurisdictional prerequisite, but a prudential policy based on concerns for federalism.” (citations omitted)).

Dallas County or the CCA reflect that the CCA has ruled on his state habeas application. *See, e.g.*, Dkt. No. 3 at 4 (indicating “unknown” as to the date and nature of the final decision).

It is therefore apparent that the CCA has yet to address the substance of the construed habeas claims that Hinshaw intends to raise in this Court. He has therefore failed to exhaust state court remedies in a procedurally correct manner, and his construed Section 2254 petition should be dismissed without prejudice under Rule 4. *See, e.g., Sam v. Louisiana*, 409 F. App’x 758, 763 (5th Cir. 2011) (per curiam) (“A federal district court may not adjudicate a habeas petition unless all claims in the petition are exhausted.” (citing *Rhines v. Weber*, 544 U.S. 269, 274 (2005))).

#### **Recommendation and Directions to Clerk of Court**

Under Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases, the Court should dismiss the construed application for a writ of habeas corpus without prejudice to Petitioner Christopher Michael Hinshaw’s right to fully and properly exhaust state court remedies. The Court should further direct that the Clerk of Court serve any order accepting or adopting this recommendation on the Texas Attorney General.

The Clerk of Court is DIRECTED to serve electronically a copy of this recommendation and the petition, along with any attachments thereto and brief in support thereof, on the Texas Attorney General as counsel for Respondent and will be directed to the attention of Edward L. Marshall, Chief, Criminal Appeals Division, Texas Attorney General’s Office. *See* RULE 4, RULES GOVERNING SECTION 2254 CASES IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURTS

A copy of these findings, conclusions, and recommendation shall be served on all parties in the manner provided by law. Any party who objects to any part of these findings, conclusions, and recommendation must file specific written objections within 14 days after being served with a copy. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); FED. R. CIV. P. 72(b). In order to be specific, an objection must identify the specific finding or recommendation to which objection is made, state the basis for the objection, and specify the place in the magistrate judge's findings, conclusions, and recommendation where the disputed determination is found. An objection that merely incorporates by reference or refers to the briefing before the magistrate judge is not specific. Failure to file specific written objections will bar the aggrieved party from appealing the factual findings and legal conclusions of the magistrate judge that are accepted or adopted by the district court, except upon grounds of plain error. *See Douglass v. United Servs. Auto. Ass'n*, 79 F.3d 1415, 1417 (5th Cir. 1996).

DATED: May 18, 2020



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DAVID L. HORAN  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE